

CITY

DEC. 85

# Style





## A Christmas tradition for artisans and consumers

by Margaret Holgate

**I**t's difficult to remember a time when there were no major craft markets in the metro area to herald the beginning of the festive season. Now, lulled to complacency by the familiarity of these annual events, it's all too easy to overlook the role they play in the development of a craft community of international renown.

The first Craftsmen's Christmas Market was held in 1971. Before then there was no organized forum that brought together craftspeople from all corners of the province and put them face to face with a large public. Kate Carmichael of Lower Rose Bay, Lunenburg Co., has been with the Market since its beginning and has been its chief organizer for the past 12 years. The organizers, she says, "felt that the quality of the work that was being done deserved more exposure," and that the craftspeople needed more opportunity to earn a decent income from their creative efforts.

The Nova Scotia Designer Craftsmen (which has recently changed its name to Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council), encouraged by the success of the first market, decided to establish one of its own two years later. The two now co-exist as annual events.

An important part of both these markets is that the work of all participants is juried, that is, reviewed by peers for excellence of workmanship and design. "We have always been very careful to advertise that our markets are juried," stresses Marie Palmer, executive director of the Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council (NSDCC). "There is certainly a strong demand out there for the sort of recreational craft you find at church bazaars and craft fairs, but we are serving very different interests."

While some of the craftspeople participate in other craft fairs, such as the very popular one at the Halifax Forum and the newer additions in Dartmouth, none of these events offers the same consistently high quality of craftsmanship.

The two original markets have become showcases for the best and most innovative that the community has to offer.

Nova Scotia's craft tradition predates the Industrial Revolution, to the time when immigrants brought with them many of the skills needed to survive in an unfamiliar and often inhospitable land. Although there have been additions and innovations, this tradition is still largely unbroken; and it's a tradition that's deeper than in more westerly parts of the country which were settled later.

Craft production as a cottage industry in Nova Scotia remained marginal until the upheaval of the 1960s brought an inflow of back-to-the-landers and artisans seeking to re-establish old values and a way of life that emphasized creativity and productivity on a more human scale.

The blending of cultures and tradition that has occurred since that time has enriched the artistic community and blurred away distinctions within it based on country of origin. Polly Greene, for example, is an American weaver who settled in Sherbrooke Village and introduced traditional weaving techniques to an area that has no real tradition of weaving. She's now claimed by Nova Scotia as one of its own.

Jeff Amos, a traditional cabinetmaker who lives in Petite Riviere, Lunenburg Co., claims he has never actually sold a major piece of furniture at any of the markets he has attended in the last few years. But, for him, on-site sales aren't the point. "The cabinets I bring with me serve more as examples of what I am capable of doing. People look at them, touch them, and then if they are interested they commission me to make specific designs."

But perhaps most important of all, these annual gatherings have given craftspeople a stronger sense of community through the stimulation and sharing that is inevitable when such a group meets. Anna Hobbs, Crafts Editor

for *Canadian Living* magazine, travels across Canada on a regular basis. Assessing the craft community here, she says "you can feel that there is such a good solid base when you go to Nova Scotia. The atmosphere is so conducive to artisans who have a vitality and expertise that snowballs in the community and leads to creative copying. You have a wonderful blend of professional craft people who have either trained in Nova Scotia or come there by choice, and people who have learned at their mother's knee. You just don't see this on the West Coast."

Prices may seem high to the casual purchaser in search of inexpensive Christmas gifts and stocking stuffers. But there's a growing public recognition of the long hours of skilled and loving care lavished on even the smallest of articles for sale. Those whose lives are punctuated by traffic jams and trips to fast food restaurants view the incorporation of crafts into their daily routines as a 1980s approximation of the more leisurely lifestyle of the past.

Cornell Gill of Tatamagouche spends 70 or 80 hours on each of his larger duck carvings, some of which sell for over \$1,000. He has been carving for only four years, but has established for himself a reputation that assures a buyer for anything he makes.

"I attended my first and only craft market in 1983," he says, "and took some of my large duck carvings primarily for display. I hadn't even parked the car after unloading and setting up before one of the most expensive ones had sold. At the end of the day I had only a few of the smaller birds left, and a handful of commissions I haven't finished working on even now."

Gill is confident enough of demand for his work that he has put his bakery and restaurant in Tatamagouche up for sale so that he can devote himself full-time to carving. He realizes, though, that he will have to resolve the conflict between the need for personal satisfac-





tion and financial security. "Spending 70 hours on a \$700 carving may become a luxury when those I produce in three or four hours sell quickly at \$50," he says. "I just hope I can find the right balance."

Halifax doll-maker Joan Doherty agrees that more people are willing to pay for quality, but she falls short of being self-sufficient with her craft. Her hand crafted dolls are so labor intensive, and the materials so expensive that even priced at \$165 to \$250 she makes very little on the sale of each doll. She has turned to making smaller items such as whimsical unicorns, angels and sheep to subsidize her labors of love.

Doherty's work sells on commission year round at the Fleece Artist in Historic Properties and at The Country Sampler near Garrison House Inn, Annapolis Royal. "Strangely enough," she says, "sales are better in the country than here in Halifax, because it's American tourists who show the most interest. There has

*Left: "Mary had a Little Lamb" doll, woolly sheep ornaments by Joan Doherty, at the Fleece Artist, Historic Properties and The Country Sampler, Annapolis Royal; Connoisseur Dessert Pack, fruit sauces and brandied spiced cherries by Greg and Lila Brooks, Constant Creation Gourmet Cuisine, Canning; Duck Carving by Cornell Gill, Tatamagouche; Pewter Christmas Ornaments, an original design each year, by Amos Pewterers, Mahone Bay; beneath these gifts, Mohair Throw by Carole Allain-Morgan, Hollow Hills Handweaving, Canning and at the Weave Shed, Wolfville.*

*Centre: Boatman Shirt for men and women in natural raw silk, dark beige, off-white or red, by Louise Williams, at*

*Clique, The Brewery; Tuck n'Lace Cotton Nightgown with hand-crocheted yoke by Lori Ashton, Serendipity Designs, at Clique, The Brewery; Painted Silk Scarf by Sandra Winter, at Clique, The Brewery; Silver bracelets, bangles and rings, gold brooch (on beige shirt) by Carol Cassidy.*

*Right: Gift Basket of mincemeat, fruitcake in two sizes, by Inner Circle Producers, Wolfville; Clowns by Kate Carmichael, Lower Rose Bay, Lunenburg Co. at The Sunflower, Tatamagouche. Most items are also available at The Craftsmen's Christmas Market, Dalplex, Nov. 29-Dec. 1.*

*Cover Photo: Studio Still Life. Christmas Wreath, decorated to order, by David Pace, Halifax.*

## Craft Market Gifts



always been a great market for dolls in the U.S., and \$300 is the average price for a collector to pay. So my dolls are considered real bargains."

Many craftspeople have responded well to pressures to become more business-like. Some, like Steve Balyi of Inner Circle Provenders in Wolfville, have attempted to improve public acceptance and awareness of their work by adopting sophisticated packaging — albeit in keeping with the traditional nature of their products. Four years ago, as an unemployed sociologist, Balyi began producing traditional Christmas cakes and puddings based on his wife's grandmother's recipes and now has a thriving

business employing 15 people. He has solved a major mail order problem by commissioning attractive handmade wooden boxes with sliding lids and woven baskets to protect the Christmas cakes, puddings and cookies.

A significant element in the rapid growth of Inner Circle Provenders was the financial boost it received from government incentive grants. But not all crafts lend themselves well to the production techniques favored by the distributors of such funds. One-of-a-kind artists usually cannot meet the criteria set for small business support funds even though their work represents much of the research and design development

for production crafts. The fear has been expressed by several members of the craft community that the exceptional progress made by Nova Scotia craftspeople over the last few years will be retarded if that aspect of crafts which generates new ideas for the community as a whole is neglected.

The general public is largely unaware of the recognition many Nova Scotians have received from a very critical international craft community. This year Dawn MacNutt, a weaver from Dartmouth, was invited to participate in the Lausanne Biennale in Switzerland, the premier world class event in terms of recognition for weavers and tapestry designers. In the field of glass art, Regine Stowe and Andrew Terris, of the Stowe-Terris Studio in Halifax, were featured in the Corning Museum of Glass "New Glass Review 5", the "who's who" publication of the glass world. These, among many other achievements, have not been well publicized even among the craftspeople themselves. And yet, without the resulting infusion of creativity the craft community would stagnate.

One way to improve public understanding of the calibre of work done within the province may be through continuing education programs. The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, the only Canadian art college to grant degrees in crafts, finds it difficult to keep up with the demand for the many craft courses it puts on each year. The NSDCC will be displaying its entire craft collection for the first time next year, at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia from March until September, and has scheduled a series of workshops, lectures and demonstrations relating to each of the featured crafts.

Craft markets have performed several very important functions over the years. They provide much needed income that keeps bill collectors at bay and enable many of the craftspeople to focus more creative energy on their work. They also help producers to identify trends in what the public want to purchase, reducing the risk of promoting a stale product or design.

For the consumer, a craft market still provides a unique occasion to experience first hand the design elements that characterize traditional crafts. You can smell the perfumed soap, cuddle a handmade doll, test the fit of a goblet or breadknife to your hand, finger a hand-stitched quilt, feel the weight and texture of a woven jacket, taste some cheese or brandied fruitcake, and perhaps even rock in a carved wooden rocking chair.

Hopefully it will be only one of many opportunities to touch, and be touched by, the products of a rich and varied heritage. **C**

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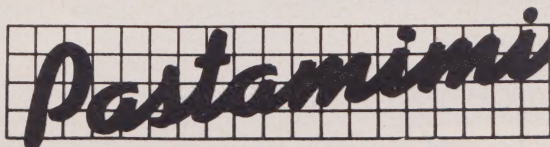
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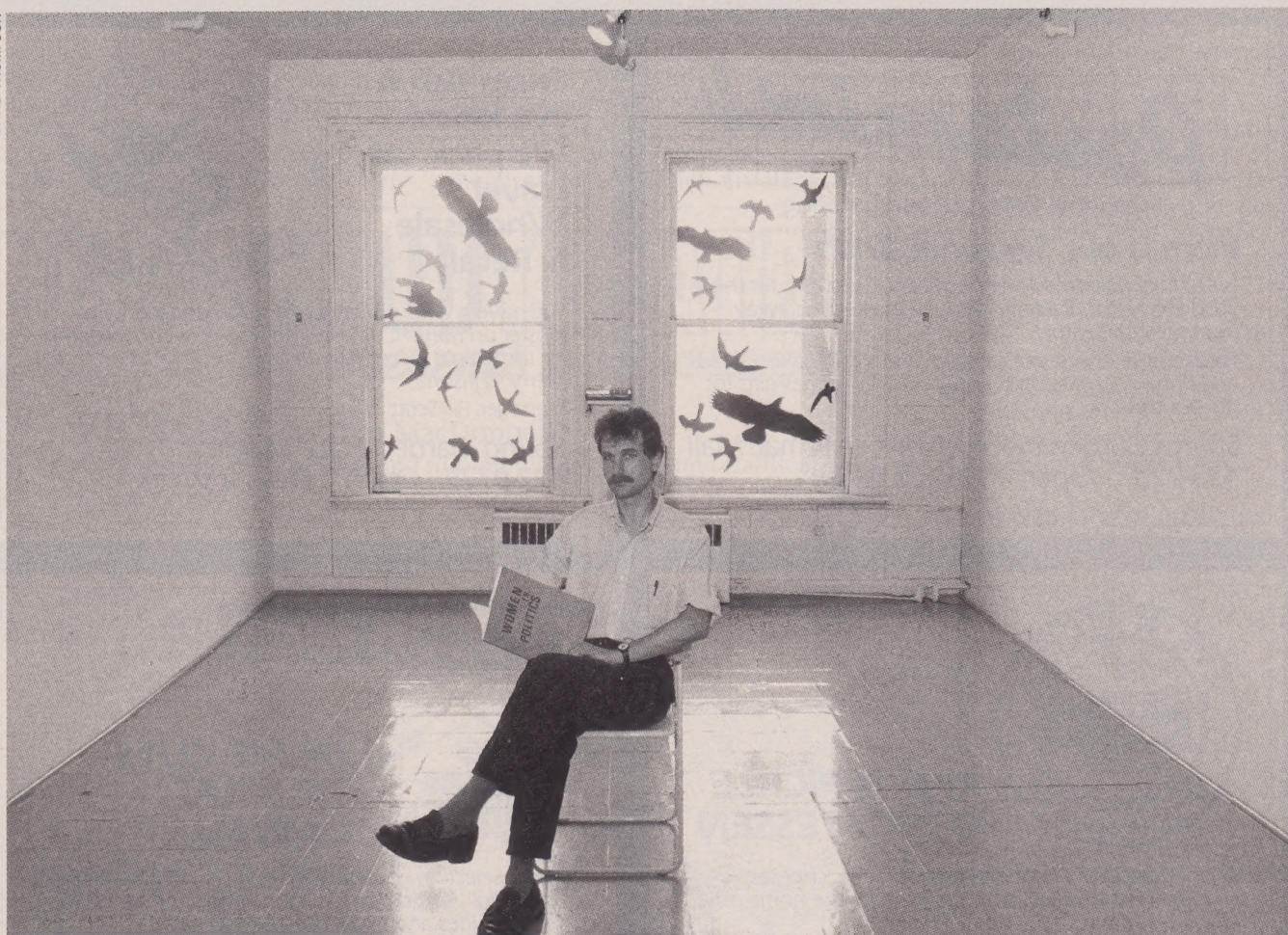
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## THE ARTS

DAVID THOMPSON



Eye Level Gallery director David Craig and "Birds" by Michael Fernandes

# An artist-run gallery for experimental art

by Alexa Thompson

**Y**ou won't find it walking past, you might not even notice it if you look up, but on the top floor of a heritage building at 1585 Barrington Street is the hub of the experimental and non-conventional arts community in Halifax.

Eye Level Gallery is not even sign-posted. That, in fact, is a sore point with director David Craig. He'd like to hang out a sign but the design would have to be approved by both his landlord and the City of Halifax, and so far he has had no luck pleasing either. It probably doesn't matter. The gallery is gaining a reputation by word of mouth.

This is an "artist-run space," in the parlance of the art world, a non-profit gallery organized and operated by artists working in the community. There are more than 100 of them dotted across Canada, in big cities as well as small towns. In towns and villages, these centres often become the focal points for social events, meetings, lectures and workshops. They may be housed in vacant buildings, schools or churches. Usually they're the product of artists working outside conventional media who are producing art not compatible with that shown in commercial or private galleries.

In Halifax there is Eye Level, and the Centre for Art Tapes on Brunswick

Street which provides facilities for artists working with audio and video tapes. Elsewhere in Nova Scotia, Gallery 1889 in Tatamagouche is developing into an artist-run space while in Annapolis Royal, the local arts council is looking for space for a centre of its own.

Eye Level first opened its doors to the public in 1974 with an unusual look at Peggy's Cove. In recent years, under the successive direction of Marina Stewart, Michael Fernandes and now Craig, the gallery has become a major force in the Canadian art scene, providing a space for young artists to exhibit their work as well as attracting established artists from across the country.



"Eye Level is dedicated to art and art forms that are experimental, innovative and adventurous," says Craig. "We try to show work that wouldn't be seen in any other gallery in Halifax." That could be sculpture and painting but may also include multimedia work and "installations."

"Installations art is a work unique to the space and to the time of the exhibition," he explains. "It doesn't necessarily exist after the exhibition is over. Usually the artist incorporates all aspects of the exhibition space — layout, lighting, sound."

The form an installation takes depends on the artist. Michael Fernandes works with large pieces, incorporating video tapes and slide presentations. Another artist works exclusively with video tapes. A third paints on huge flats that resemble theatrical sets.

The gallery also supports a dance program under the direction of board member and independent dancer, Diane Moore. Each year she helps produce a half dozen performances with both local dancers and national performers such as Julie West from Ottawa or Marie Chouinarch from Montreal.

Another of its more innovative productions is the Annual Audio by Artists Festival. Now in its seventh year, the festival began as a collaboration between Nova Music, an offshoot of Dalhousie's Music Department, Eye Level and the Centre for Art Tapes. Last year the festival included experimental music performed at a number of city-wide locations while Craig broadcast live narratives over CKDU radio.

Exhibitions at Eye Level are challenging to the mind and the eye. There are usually 20 to 30 performances, exhibitions and workshops a year. Near Christmas, there will be works by Nancy Edell and Micah Lexier. Lexier produces intricate handmade boxes and drawers. As a drawer is opened or a lid lifted, a tape recorder is activated and plays Lexier's prose poetry and narrative statements.

In Canada, most of the spaces sprang up in response to dissatisfaction with commercial galleries by many artists in the 1960s and 1970s. They are funded by the Canada Council, which encourages such grass roots movements. Some, like Eye Level receive extra funding from the provincial department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness.

Still, with an operating budget of about \$60,000, money is tight. Craig prides himself, however, that the gallery pays artists' fees in accordance with CAR (Canadian Artists Representation) guidelines — \$600 for solo exhibition. CAR is a national organization which represents the interests and concerns of Canadian artists.

As Eye Level Gallery enters its 12th

year, its future is uncertain. Support for the gallery is manifest in the exhibitions it attracts, the quality of performance it sponsors, and the growing arts community behind it. However, without a greater commitment from business interests, provincial and municipal governments, its future may be tenuous. It's not just Eye Level but all the arts in Nova Scotia that may suffer.

Craig knows there is talent here, but he worries that talent may go elsewhere unless more secure financial support is forthcoming from both private and public sectors. There are encouraging signs, he believes, but governments and business, naturally cautious, move slow-

ly and it may be ten years or more before a fully integrated support system is in place. By then it may be too late.

"That is ten years out of the creative life of an artist," Craig says. "Many, especially the most competitive, may go elsewhere." If that happens he'll regret it, not just personally but also because he feels a thriving arts community and civic pride go hand-in-hand. There's no reason why Halifax shouldn't be an arts centre to rival Montreal or Toronto. The benefits in tourists' dollars and business revenues will be substantial. Support of the arts is a long-term investment, he believes, and one that makes good sense. **C**

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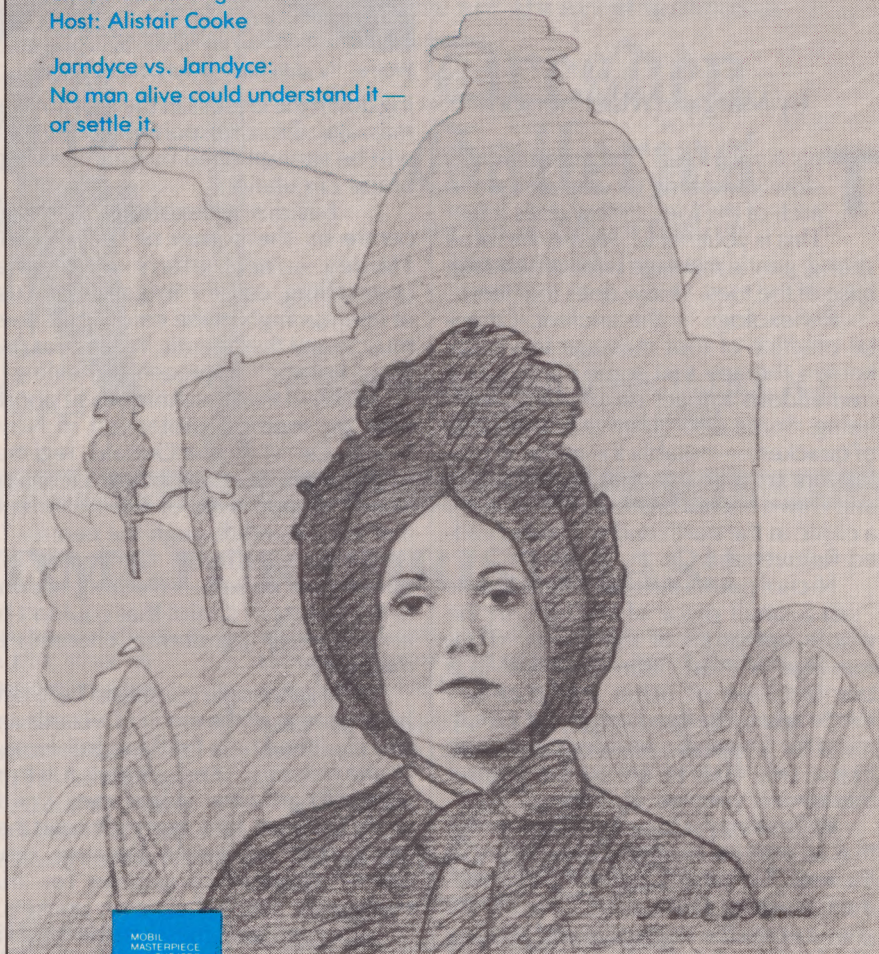
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# Massage therapy from the feet up

*A north end clinic called Rejuvenation will give you "reflexology" massages and other treatments. The medical establishment won't like it*

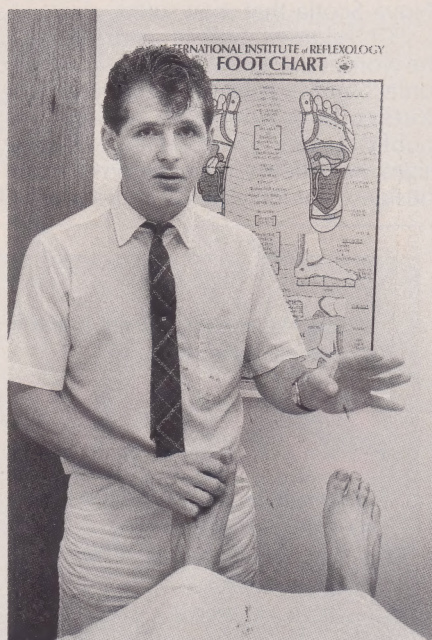
by Margaret MacPherson

**T**his is your liver." The thumb moves slowly, inching its way across the arch of the foot. "How does it feel?" "This is your neck." Again, the same strong, gentle massage is felt around the base of the toes. "How does that feel?"

Reflexology — the ancient, Oriental practice of foot massage is a little-known therapy that some claim has a tremendous impact on physical well-being. Some also claim that it smacks of quackery — notably the medical profession. It's a charge that Darrel Wolfe and Dawn Nichol bristle at. The two run a clinic in the north end of Halifax called Rejuvenation.

Nichol points out that reflexology is "just a small piece of the pie" in the whole operation of the clinic. "Foot massage is most often included in a combination of other treatments," Wolfe adds. "Reflexology is not a treatment for a specific problem. It's more like a side kick to aid in the natural therapeutic process of healing."

Reflexology is based on the premise that all arteries end their blood flow in the feet. A crystallization of waste products such as lactic acids, the theory goes, causes the stagnation and pooling of blood not only in the feet but throughout the whole system. Nerve endings in the feet reflexly correspond to different areas of the body and by break-



Wolfe: "a side kick to natural healing"

ing down the crystals in the foot through massage, the corresponding body parts will be strengthened by an increase of blood circulation.

Besides reflexology, the small centre on the corner of Isleville and Stanley streets offers nutritional counselling, colonic irrigation (the use of enemas high in the colon) and deep muscle and therapeutic massage as part of a "holistic" approach to healing.

Many of these techniques sit poorly with the medical profession in Nova Scotia. Dr. M.R. MacDonald, registrar of the Nova Scotia Medical Licensing Board, disapproves of the treatments that are offered through the centre. "It is fringe medicine bordering on quackery," he says. "Nothing is done at these sorts of clinics that couldn't be done through the normal channels of medicine."

"We get people coming in here who have gone to all the medical wizards and still can't find help for their problems," Wolfe responds. "And ailments run from ulcers to arthritis. When they finally come to see us, they see results and they demand to see results because, most often, clients are paying for our treatments out of their own pockets."

Although both massage therapists at the clinic are registered under the Ontario Drugless Practitioner's Act and are affiliated with the Reflexology Association of Canada, they are not licensed

under Nova Scotia's Medical Act as MacDonald says they must be. Yet clients come from as far away as the United States to experience the treatments (drugless) of the centre. Accommodations for out-of-town clients are included in the price of therapy.

One older gentleman, approached outside the centre, said he'd been coming in for treatments for the past six months and he's "felt better than ever before." Therapeutic massage and whirlpool baths as well as a herbal vitamin program are part of his treatment — although he did not specify his ailment. "I just know how much better I've been feeling since I started coming here," he said, asking not to be identified.

Steam cabinets, whirlpools, herbal oils and soft music create a relaxing atmosphere at the clinic. Wolfe admits he uses every angle he can to create a calm, positive environment in which to work with his clients. "A lot of physical problems stem from psychological stress," he states. Psychological stress is something that Nichol and Wolfe themselves have plenty of as a result of the not-so-smooth running of their clinic. Two years ago, in the fall of 1983, a police investigation into the centre was instigated by the Nova Scotia Medical Board. Two RCMP officers took case histories, deposit books and files in an attempt to find evidence against the practice.

"They were so sure they'd have a charge against us that they had prepared a search warrant beforehand," says Nichol. "We counteracted by suing because, even after interviewing hundreds of our clients, they could find nothing wrong or illegal about our practice."

Nichol and Wolfe eventually dropped the charges because, as Nichol explains, "I was sick of the whole affair. Besides, I felt that we'd won (the case) after they'd fine-tooth-combed us and found nothing."

Rejuvenation has continued its operation but in the past two years it has kept a fairly low profile. The question of whether or not natural medications and massage therapy are truly beneficial can go on and on in lengthy debate. The fact remains, however, that even if foot massage does not improve one's overall health, reflexology is definitely a means of attaining relaxation. It is an interesting and unique treat to weary feet. **C**

ALBERT LEE



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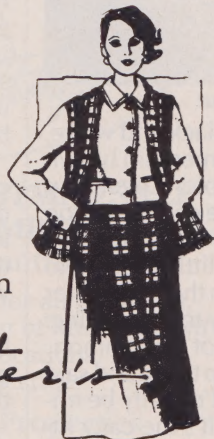
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# Those weird, wonderful hairstyles

*You've seen them: purple dyes, layers, patches: it's called "neotech" hair design, created by Tina Turner's hairstylist*

by Margaret MacPherson

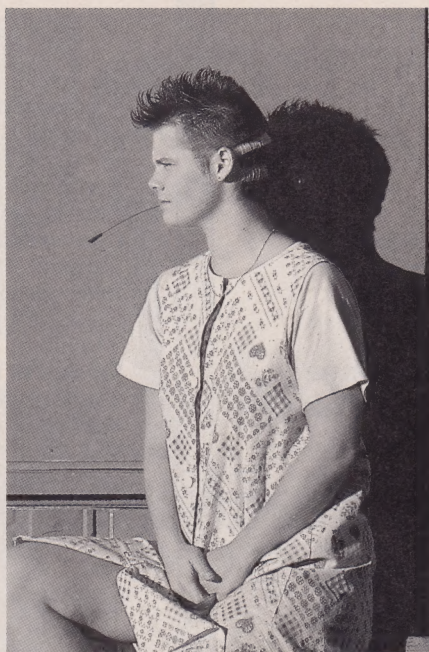
*Knotted, polka-dotted  
Twisted, beaded, braided  
Powdered, flowered and  
confettied  
Bangled, tangled, spangled and  
spaghettied  
Hair, hair, hair, hair. . . .*

*Rock Opera Hair 1967*

**S**hortly after Tina Turner finished her late summer East Coast tour, a lesser known and totally different artist followed in her wake. Ethylene Joseph, Turner's hairstylist, wields scissors the way Turner wields a microphone, with precise and perfect snips and clips to a rhythm beating in her own head. The style goes by the name of neotech hair design. Evidence of it can usually be seen on the streets of Halifax on individuals sporting off-the-wall hairstyles in somewhat shocking colors.

Originally from London, Eng., Joseph has recently moved to Toronto and is touring Eastern Canada teaching her rule-breaking ideas of style. Local hairstylists have jumped on the bandwagon. A number of them are, in the Joseph vocabulary, "crop cutting," "chipping," "scrunch coloring" and "anti-headshaping."

Dierdre Logue, a ceramics student from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, emerged from the neotech demonstrations with perhaps the most striking cut. Leaving the natural color on top, Joseph cropped Logue's hair very closely on the sides and incorporated a series of six ledges from crown to neck.



**Logue: the most striking cut**

Each ledge alternated black and white, in direct contrast to the medium brown of Logue's natural hair color. Logue says that, in the morning, she combs the top of her hair into a point "like kids in a bath tub do" and, with little thought to the horizontal stripes on the back of her head, goes about her day-to-day routine. Verbal harassment is not uncommon.

"If someone came up to me and said 'I really hate your hair,' I'd really be impressed," says Logue. "It's the catty little criticisms that I don't like." She adds with a smile, "I do get a lot of compliments though."

Surprisingly Logue has found more approval from older women than those in her own peer group. "I make a statement in my appearance," she explains. "My new hairstyle reflects individuality and new changes . . . the way things are going to be."

The stylist learning neotech design takes into account the shape of customers' faces, their heads and even, to some extent, their personalities. "I wouldn't give a way-out haircut unless my customer had a way-out appearance," says Joseph. "Expression in dress and attitude are needed to carry some of my cuts."

Not all neotech haircuts are so bizarre that the average woman (or man) on-the-street couldn't wear them. Bridget Sullivan is not an artist but a 37-year-old housewife who, like Logue,

signed up as a demonstration model for Joseph's four day teaching stint. She loves her new haircut.

"I've always worn my hair in a shoulder-length blunt cut," she explains. "This summer I finally decided to go shorter. It was a nice cut but very ordinary."

Sullivan now boasts neotech hair design. The hair at her crown is micro-short and is layered longer and longer towards her face and neck. It can be combed into different degrees of spikiness, depending on mood and occasion. "I'm married to a doctor and sometimes the hairstyle has to be a little bit, well, conventional," she adds.

Sullivan has two daughters aged 13 and 14. They both like their mother's new look and Sullivan has noted a different attitude among her daughters' friends now. "I am more often approached by the girls' friends now. It's just for small talk and chatter but somehow it seems more open between us. Like my appearance has helped bridge some distance," Sullivan says.

Maintenance of the new hair cuts could be costly. Logue expects "to shave off all the stripes when I want a new look," but Sullivan intends to stay with the neotech hair design, at least for a while.

"I don't think I'll ever go back to a blunt cut," she says. "I just won't let it grow so long that the stylist can't follow the original cut."

Marie Prendergast is one of many local hairstylists who has learned the techniques of the trend-setting styles. "It's wonderful to do different cuts," she says. "I can do triangles and tendrils and even jazz up dull hair with subtle vegetable dyes like burgundy or rose colored tints," she says. "In this business we always have to advance ourselves if we expect to keep up with the changing times."

For the adventurous, patchwork colors, criss-cross cropping and wild, witty cuts will enhance vibrant winter fashions. For the more conservative, light layering and neatly capped necklines will be the order of the day. Either way, neotech haircuts will be paraded on Halifax sidewalks through winter months and well into the summer.

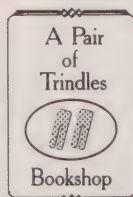
Ethylene Joseph calls the look created by her designs a "sophisticated mess." She's right but her clients add that it's a sophisticated mess that's a whole lot of fun. **C**



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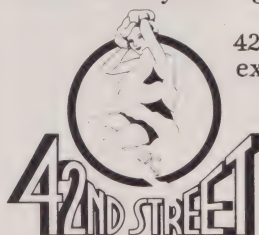
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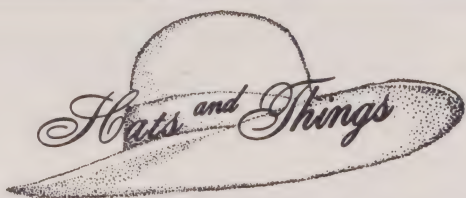
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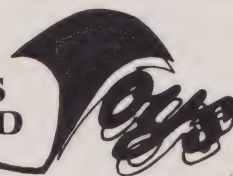
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PHOTOS BY ALBERT LEE

## A fashion designer with a Victorian touch

*She began by making dolls' clothes as a youngster and moved on to Victorian costumes. Now Sharon Croft designs her own fabrics and believes in the classic look that women buy as an investment*

by Susan MacPhee

**A** childhood spent chasing around the wharves in coastal villages like Portuguese Cove and Herring Cove seems more likely to produce a talent for weaving fish-nets than one for creating high fashion design. Not in the case of Halifax designer Sharon Croft.

Although she spent hours on the wharf dangling a fishing line, "which was my very favorite pastime," Croft had another obsession, one that was far removed from her more tom-boyish pur-

suits. It was creating new things with her hands. Her first sewing project was a pair of trousers which she designed and constructed for a doll — at age seven. That was her last such activity until Grade 9 when her creativity and need to be "different" resulted in another whim somewhat unusual in a child growing up in a Nova Scotia fishing village. Rather than make do with the usual off-the-rack clothing, she went to a dressmaker. "I always wanted something different...I'd look in magazines and say, 'that's what I'd like to have', but of course you couldn't buy it here."

By the time Croft left high school in 1969 she decided it was time to start making her own clothing. And no simple starter patterns for this novice. She dug right into the more complicated *Vogue* productions. "They were more complicated, but in the actual process

they made you less frustrated, because the patterns were more clearly explained, more refined, and I felt at that point I would rather have 34 pieces to a jacket and feel that lovely, subtle tapering of say, the waist, than to have sort of a box or a very large shoulder that had to be chopped down and by the time you finished chopping down the armhole the shape was gone."

Custom sewing was her operation for the next nine years. Little by little she learned enough to manipulate patterns — taking three or four, using this sleeve, that collar, to suit the garment more perfectly to the person. This led to frustration, as she was limited to what a particular pattern, or group of patterns, could provide.

At that time she also began to recognize her limitations, and realized that she needed training. The only training available in Halifax was a course



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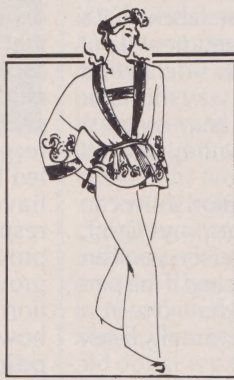
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## CityForum

I realize that the Nova Scotia school board elections, the subject of an article in *CityStyle* (Oct. '85) are now past history. New board members in Nova Scotia don't take office until the year-end, however, and so the issues raised in Deborah Draper's article entitled, *Elected School Boards: Who Cares?* are still current, including the issues of board membership, possible conflict of interest, and education funding. I must point out, however, that the statement that "aldermen represent parents but also senior citizens and other taxpayers, while elected school board members usually represent only parents" deserves response. School boards are not parent-teacher associations, although they very much appreciate the work of parent-teacher and home-and-school groups. School board members represent young people, parents, grandparents, non-parents, and senior citizens. School boards deal with a constituency which represents a growing number of older citizens and childless couples and individuals. Nor does the evidence show that fully elected school boards are less fiscally responsible than those which include aldermen and other appointed school board members. The public record in Nova Scotia shows that boards led by elected school board members have an excellent record of fiscal responsibility. Comparisons in other provinces are difficult, since no other province has a school board composition similar to Nova Scotia's. It should, however, be noted that the trustee appointed several months ago by the British Columbia government to take over the affairs of the Vancouver School Board publicly admitted that the board had no choice but to set its budget as it had done. British Columbia school boards, like those from the Pacific Coast to New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, are fully elected. (Elected school boards in Atlantic Canada, however, have no significant taxing authority.) Among the good parts of your story was the statement that "elected school boards work because the public makes the members accountable." The comment that if boards had taxing authority, "a person's total property tax bill would likely remain the same, but it would be apportioned differently," is also worthy of note. As far as taxpayers having to "come to grips" with competing pressures for the tax dollar, what do you suppose is happening now, without the school board accountability? Who cares? It's probably obvious that we do.

Greg Murphy, President  
Nova Scotia School Boards Association



Clary and Sharon Croft: they listen to the client

given by costume designer Robert Doyle at Dalhousie, but she couldn't arrange a schedule and didn't take the course.

In 1975 Croft designed a dress under the sponsorship of Sherbrooke Village Restorations. "They gave me the fabric and I made an historic dress, what I felt was an interpretation of it. I did it to the best of my ability, but I really knew my limitations after that and I really wanted to do better." It was time to consider training again.

She took the dress to Doyle for a critique. "He gave me a lot of good pointers...he didn't pull any punches, but he wasn't cruel. He asked me the questions back...Why? Where? At that point I knew I had to be honest with myself and him." She then took his course at Dalhousie.

Croft gained experience in a wide variety of design techniques and fashions, but whenever a special assignment offered the freedom to select a favorite period or design type, she chose the Victorian era, mostly because of Sherbrooke Village. After graduation, she worked several seasons at the Village, designing and producing the turn-of-the-century clothing worn by the employees. In her own business now, Croft Designs, she does mostly contemporary designs, although she incorporates a Victorian touch when appropriate, such as matching up a Victorian shawl with a hand-woven wool skirt.

Croft's husband Clary — the well-known folk balladeer — graduated this year from the Dalhousie design course, and handweaves many of her fabrics. The two take great care in matching their products to the client's needs. Says Sharon, "When a client comes, first thing we do is discuss what the aim is, what they're looking for...we talk about their needs, their lifestyle and what colors they like...I want to know that I'm

giving a person appropriate clothing. So the first meeting is to get to know them." By the second meeting, Clary — who does the sketches for Sharon's designs — usually has a sketch to show the client.

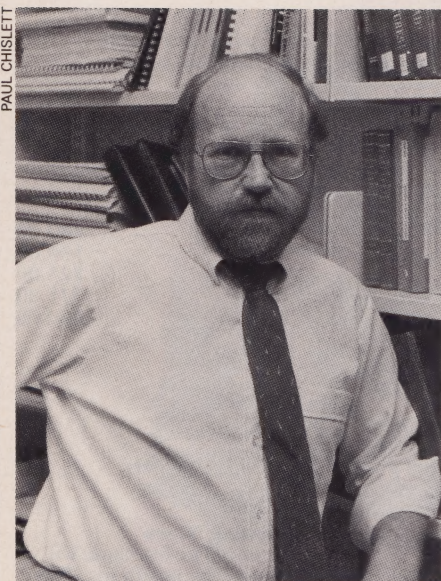
Sharon also does mock-ups in unbleached cotton or a fabric that will drape the same way as the fabric that's to be used does. "And sometimes I'll put a different sleeve on each side so that they have choices all the way through. Once I see the body, I may suggest things that may flatter that they haven't thought about."

A designer doing a fashion show can design whatever she wants, says Croft, "but when it comes to a person you can design a flamboyant dress, and if the person doesn't carry it off, what have you done? I think it's important to really listen to the client."

Croft doesn't advertise in any conventional manner, relying on word-of-mouth and business from people who have seen her work at fashion shows around metro. Her first show was organized with another former Dalhousie student, designer Judy Eames, and held in December 1980 at the Clipper Cay restaurant. They put it together in only two months — a considerable amount of work since they showed 50 outfits consisting of close to 300 pieces, including accessories.

Croft likes doing fashion shows, and it has the added attraction of allowing her to express her personal designing tastes. "At that point you have the freedom, you tend to put in your personal choices because you aren't designing for a particular person's needs. My idea for designing clothing is for a very classic — and I say classic in that it doesn't go out of style in a couple of years — look, because the people who are buying the clothes aren't going to buy them just for a season, they're looking for an investment." **C**





**Rollie Thompson is a professor at Dalhousie Law School**

by Rollie Thompson

**W**e all like to believe in equality before the law. It's one of those comfortable myths, taught in civics classes and universities and espoused by editorial writers and politicians on ceremonial occasions. We even put it in our Charter of Rights: "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law," etc., etc.

As they say on those CBC ads, "look again." Hard numbers tell us something different.

Equality before the law means, for starters, equal access to the legal system. In Canada, and Nova Scotia, that equal access depends upon the availability of legal aid to those who can't afford a lawyer. Whether we like to admit it or not, our laws are sufficiently complicated that most citizens — and especially poor people — require the assistance of a lawyer to cope with legal problems.

In Nova Scotia, legal aid is delivered primarily through salaried lawyers employed by the Nova Scotia Legal Aid

## Not too much equality please, we're Nova Scotians

Commission. In 1983-84, the Commission's lawyers handled some 14,000 cases and Dalhousie Legal Aid Services (affiliated with Dalhousie Law School) served another 1,800 clients. Sounds like a lot, right?

Look again. If you are a poor person, eligible for legal aid, less than 50 lawyers are available to deal with your problem, out of a total provincial Bar of about 1,000 practising lawyers. A poor person is 13 times less likely to have access to a lawyer, even though the poor have as many, if not more, legal problems than most citizens. If all Nova Scotians were to have equal access to a lawyer, then we would have to have 400 legal aid lawyers in Nova Scotia.

In 1985-86, the federal and provincial governments will spend about \$3.7 million on legal aid in Nova Scotia. But, on a per capita basis, that sum amounts to less than half the national average. Moreover, almost 80 cents of every legal aid dollar is paid by the federal government. Over the last six years, the federal contribution has risen while the province's has dropped. In fact, today our provincial government kicks in less for legal aid, \$300,000 less than six years ago and \$750,000 less than four years ago.

In the summer of 1982, the provincial government slashed the legal aid budget, at a time when it proclaimed no cuts in "essential social services." Ironically, during that same year, the province received the results of a federally-funded evaluation of Nova Scotia Legal Aid. The evaluation found that NSLA was delivering high-quality, cost-effective legal services within the limits imposed by government. The legal aid scheme is only now beginning to recover from the 1982 cuts, thanks mostly to federal funding.

What do all these numbers mean for the poor client? They mean waiting to get into a legal aid office. Being one client on a lawyer's burgeoning caseload. Not getting a lawyer at all for certain kinds of urgent legal problems.

Sometimes just giving up.

Because of the funding restraints and the sheer pressure of criminal and family cases, some kinds of problems have little or no priority in Nova Scotia's legal aid scheme. The mother with children, denied social assistance, must navigate the social service bureaucracy and appeals system alone. The family evicted from rental housing must move yet again. The family whose power is disconnected is left in the dark and cold. In these matters, the poor go without in Nova Scotia.

These kinds of legal problems are described as "essential legal services," along with criminal and family matters, in a recent report of a Canadian Bar Association committee on legal aid. At its annual meeting in Halifax this past August, the CBA resolved that essential legal services are a government responsibility and must be provided at public expense. In its report, the CBA committee identified adequate funding as the most pressing problem facing legal aid, not only to provide a minimum standard of essential services, but also to assure the independence of legal aid problems from government.

Politicians do not like legal aid. The reason is simple: legal aid lawyers force the government to obey its own laws. At every turn, a poor person's life is controlled or affected by government in some form. Effective representation of the poor puts pressure upon governments; in defending those prosecuted by governments, in seeking more government benefits for clients, in exposing inadequate or unfair laws.

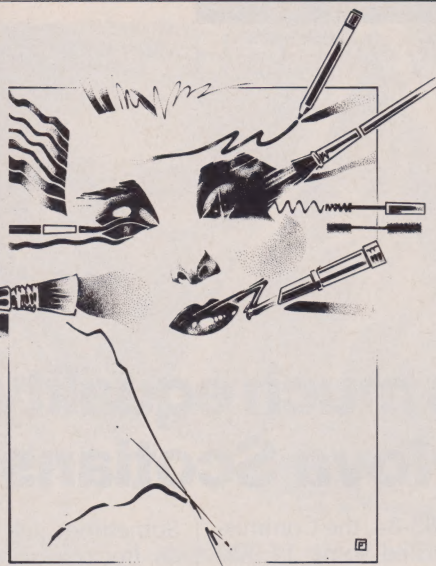
Why should I fund some service to give me this grief, says the politician. Accordingly, governments fund just enough legal aid to maintain the myth of legal representation and equality, while ensuring that the reality amounts to much less.

Equality before the law, you say? In Nova Scotia, the reality is otherwise. Just a little bit of equality, but not too much please. **c**



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